

Maria College Campus Development Plan District Application Narrative

Introduction

Maria College is located on the south side of the City of Albany in New York State. As an urban campus, the college is bordered by New Scotland Avenue to the north and South Manning Boulevard to the east. The college is within a mixed-use neighborhood, with St. Peter's Hospital to the east, educational and office buildings to the south and residential uses to the west and north. The College is located in a MU-CI (Mixed Use, Campus/Institutions) zone, Higher Education Institutional use. See attached zoning map. Maria College is located on several tax parcels of which have varying ownership. As noted in the attached Owner's Consent Form and letter, work on leased parcels is approved by the owner.

Maria College has developed a campus master plan with the goal of improving the appearance, safety and efficiency of the urban campus. Through the development of the campus master plan the College solidified the idea to bring their mission to bear on the physical environment and making the College's values physically visible. The opportunity to capitalize on the small feel and open nature of the campus to adapt the site design to meet contemporary needs have been distilled into the plans as submitted for this District Application. The area of the campus considered within the boundary of this District Application is indicated on the aerial mapping and District Development Plan.

Key components of the site plan include the following:

- Relocation of parking and vehicular circulation to the periphery to allow the center of the campus to be pedestrian focused. Creation of a pedestrian focus is achieved by separating vehicles from the pedestrians and increases the safety for students, staff and visitors.
- Elimination of the two driveways/curb cuts between Marian Hall and the Main Building and the curb cut at Marian Hall. Development of a new main campus entrance to the west of Marian Hall fosters central pedestrian space.
- Designation of pedestrian zones and creation of pedestrian circulation between buildings.
- Maximization of universal accessibility throughout campus. Integration of universal access as a key site design component provides for the dignity of each person.
- Improvements to the visual character and quality of the campus.
- Integration of indoor and outdoor spaces.
- Integration of a sustainability focus in all design solutions.
- Address site security issues by providing a consistent campus lighting standard and improved visibility throughout the campus.
- No new buildings were envisioned in the master plan. Building work includes minor interior renovations and some modest vestibule additions.

Buildings

The buildings on the campus include the following:

- Marian Hall: located in the western portion of the campus includes classrooms, faculty offices and meeting spaces. Marian Hall is a three-story structure, 50,520sf gross total.

Proposed work includes a 400sf vestibule addition for improved accessibility, including an elevator.

- Main Building: located in the central area of campus, Main Building houses administration, classrooms, staff offices and a café. It includes two stories, 39,435sf gross total. Proposed addition at the south end will be a vestibule and café expansion, 720sf.
- Mercy Hall: located in the southern portion of the campus is a one-story structure, 5,480sf gross. Mercy hall is used for administration staff and there are no proposed additions.
- McAuley Building, in the eastern portion of the campus is a three-story structure, 34,070sf gross total. Uses include classrooms, faculty offices and labs. Interior renovations recently completed on McAuley Hall and no additions are proposed.

Parking and Circulation

Existing parking is generally located in two large surface lots. These are identified in the application as Lot 1 and Lot 2 with 130 and 118 parking spaces respectively. The College's master plan calls for removal of Lot 1 for construction of a central campus green space. The loss of these parking spaces is made up in new parking lots 3 and 4 at the perimeter of the campus. Lot 3 includes 30 spaces and lot 4 includes 74 spaces. Lot 2 will be reconfigured slightly to improve circulation and drainage, with a gain of 18 spaces, for a total in Lot 2 of 136 spaces. The parking lot to the east of McAuley Building is designated as Lot 5 and is accessed from South Manning Boulevard. This lot includes 32 parking spaces and no changes are proposed. In summary, existing parking totals 280 spaces and proposed parking totals 302 spaces. Parking spaces reserved for handicap use will be provided and are shown on the District Development Plan adjacent to accessible building entrances. Quantity provided will be in compliance with ADA standards.

Bicycle parking is currently provided via a bike rack located near Marian Hall and accommodates 10 bicycles. With the reconfiguration of the campus circulation system, provisions for bicycle parking will be integrated into the campus plan. Based on City requirements, 60 bicycle spaces, 17 of which are enclosed would be required. The demand for bicycle parking space is not anticipated to warrant this high number of spaces. The distance traveled by the majority of students and faculty/staff does not foster travel via bicycle. This application requests reduction in the number of bicycle parking provided to equal 40 spaces, 10 of which are enclosed.

Maria College is located on New Scotland Avenue and within an area of Albany currently under evaluation for traffic conditions, concerns and opportunities. The proposed district plan includes a new curb cut on New Scotland Avenue at the western end of the project site. As supported in the attached Traffic Study, the installation of a new curb cut along New Scotland Avenue will not compromise public health and safety for automobile, bicycle or pedestrian traffic and the new curb cut is consistent with the intent and character of the district in which the property is located. Following review and recommendation by the Chief Planning Official and the City Engineer and review and determination by the Commissioner of General Services, an application for a Curb Cut Permit will be made. New emergency access is provided to the west of Main Building and will be designed to City standards for pavement width and structural design to accommodate fire trucks while maintaining a pedestrian feel. This emergency access will replace the existing asphalt driveway and curb cut directly west of Main Building. This emergency drive will not be used by the public and will only be used for emergency vehicular access. The two existing curb cuts, including at the Marian Hall circle and at the parking lot will be removed/closed.

Utilities

The campus is served by municipal water and sanitary sewer service. The College has not indicated any issues of concern with either the water or the sanitary sewer systems. As there are no building additions proposed and no significant increase in the number of students or faculty resulting in an increased demand on the water or sanitary sewer systems, no work on those systems is proposed.

As part of this application, existing and proposed storm water conditions have been assessed and are summarized in submitted Storm Water Pollution Prevention Control Plan. The storm water design has been prepared in accordance with the City's stormwater, grading and erosion control requirements. A geotechnical evaluation is currently underway to confirm subsurface conditions. The storm water management has been designed with a view toward the entire improvement project buildout as well as the necessity for a phased construction schedule.

Site Lighting, Landscaping and Signage

A campus standard for site lighting will be implemented with the goal of improving safety and ease of movement throughout the campus for evening classes and events. Site lighting will include parking lot lighting, pathway lighting and building entrance lighting. All lighting will be designed to meet the City of Albany standards and requirements.

Improvements to the visual character of the campus and quality of the outdoor spaces will include installation of new landscaping. Shade trees and lawn areas will provide a campus feel while creating shade and multiuse areas. Focal planting including shrubs and groundcovers will be planted at building entries, plazas and courtyards. All plant material will be suitable for the climatic zone and hardy for urban conditions. Where possible, native plant material will be used.

Site signage will adhere to the requirements and regulations of the City's signage permit procedures and a Sign Permit will be obtained from the Chief Building Official prior to construction of new signage including signage and design treatment at the new entry drive.

Phasing

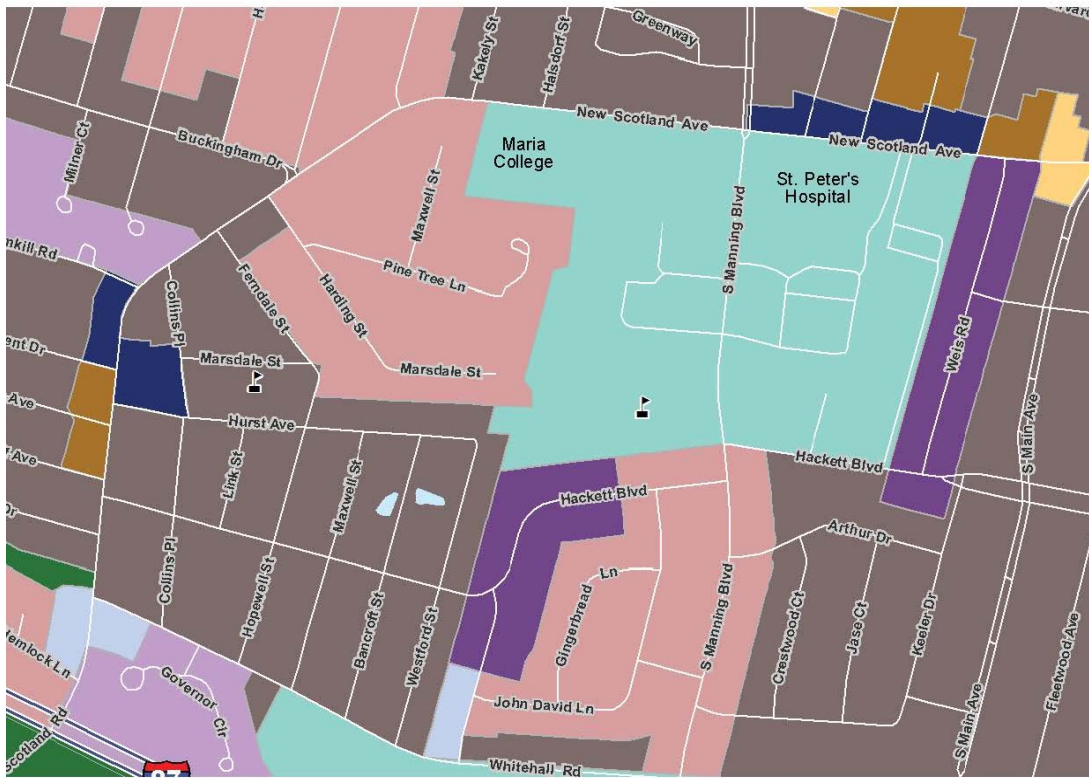
The realization of the full district area improvements and development will be in a phased approach. The intent is for the area west and south of Marian Hall to be constructed first, with the area between Marian Hall and Main Building in phase 2. Work in the southern parking lot may be constructed as part of phase 2 or may be a 3rd phase.

Conclusion

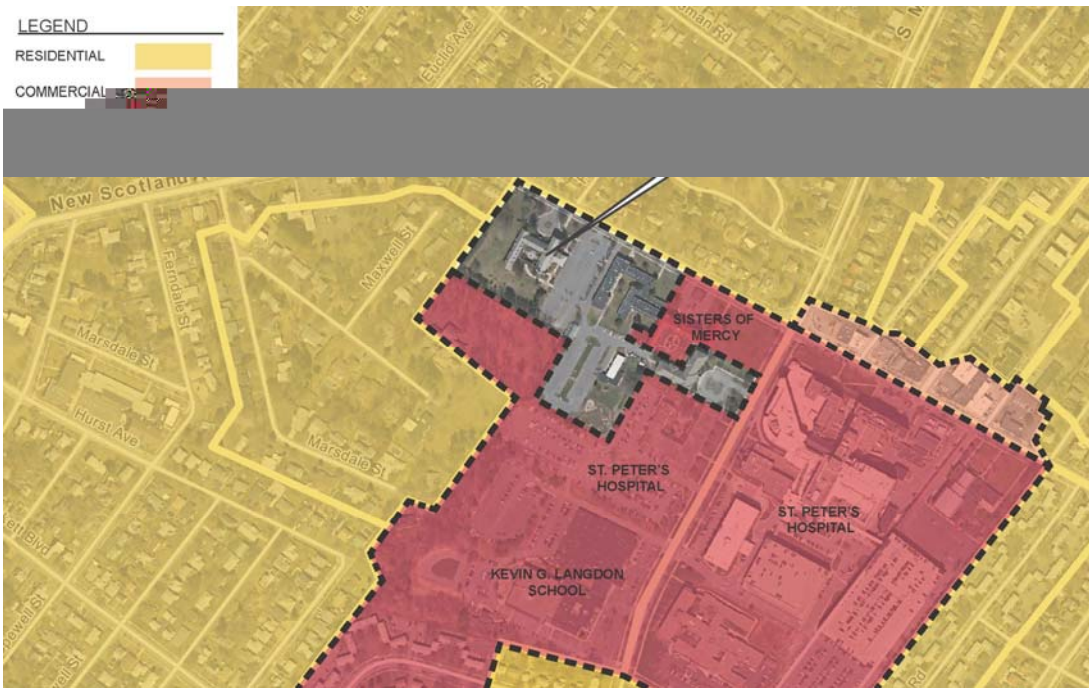
This site plan application complies with standards for District Plans as set forth in the Administrative Manual. The layout of parking, loading and circulation routes does not result in greater adverse impact on the adjacent Residential districts than if not built and improves the safety and efficiency of circulation on campus.

Sufficient public safety, transportation and utility facilities and services are available to serve the planning area at the proposed level of development while maintaining sufficient levels of service to existing and anticipated development in the surrounding areas.

Short Environmental Assessment Form has been prepared and is attached to this application.



City of Albany Zoning Map



Neighborhood Use Map